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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUTHAURA (Kenya)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued) (A/50/20 and A/50/384; A/C.4/50/L.9)

1. Mr. BOECK (Austria), introducing draft resolution A/C.4/50/L.9 entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" on behalf of the Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), said that the text of the draft reflected the results of the sessions of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and two of its Subcommittees. In accordance with the understanding reached the previous year, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had for the first time considered as a matter of priority its agenda item on the problem of space debris. As in previous years, numerous technical presentations had been given on various aspects of the space debris problem and the Subcommittee, pursuant to the directions of the General Assembly in resolution 49/34 of 9 December 1994, had adopted a comprehensive multi-year plan for dealing with that agenda item.

2. The Working Group of the Whole had decided that the special theme for the 1996 session should be "Utilization of micro- and small satellites for the expansion of low-cost space activities, taking into account the needs of developing countries".

3. The Legal Subcommittee, which had held its thirty-fourth session in April 1995 in Vienna, had again decided to temporarily discontinue reviewing its Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space until the results of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's work had been made available.

4. COPUOS had held its thirty-eighth session in April 1995 in Vienna. It had reviewed and endorsed the reports of its subsidiary bodies on their 1995 sessions and continued its consideration of other items on its agenda, including "Spin-off benefits of space technology" and "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes". The Committee had also discussed several important issues under its agenda item "Other matters".

5. The Committee had continued its discussion on the possible convening of a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE) and agreed that such a conference could be held before the turn of the present century. The Committee had again noted that before recommending a date for a third UNISPACE conference, there would need to be a consensus recommendation from the Committee on the agenda, venue and funding for the conference and that there should be full consideration of other ways of achieving the goals of the conference. The Committee therefore requested the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to conduct a thorough analysis of all the issues related to the convening of a third UNISPACE conference and that the Subcommittee should, at its 1996 session, complete development and refinement of a framework that would allow the Committee, at its 1996 session, to evaluate all the proposals for such a conference. The Committee had decided that the aim of

those discussions should be to make a final decision on a recommendation to the General Assembly at its 1996 session.

6. During its 1995 session, the Legal Subcommittee had held extensive discussions on its working methods and arrived at a number of recommendations for improving its methods of work. Pursuant to its decision of the previous year, the Committee had set up a Working Group of the Whole to discuss a broad range of issues related to its methods of work. In addition to endorsing the recommendations of the Legal Subcommittee, COPUOS had approved a number of measures designed to streamline its sessions and ensure they would be conducted with the utmost flexibility.

7. The Committee had also reviewed its need for verbatim records and decided that, with effect from its following session, it would use unedited transcripts instead of verbatim records. That decision would result in significant savings to the Organization. The Committee had also requested the Legal Subcommittee to review its need for summary records. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

8. Mr. PYROZHKOV (Ukraine) said that Ukraine had always been consistent in its support for further intensification of international cooperation in the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and in particular it had supported the work of COPUOS and its Subcommittees in implementing the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and coordinating the space activities of the Committee's member States.

9. He reminded the Committee that "Sich-1", Ukraine's first space satellite, had been launched on 31 August 1995 from the Russian space centre at Plesetsk under Ukrainian control. The launch had proved that Ukraine had essentially positioned itself as a space power by finally establishing an integrated national terrestrial infrastructure based on the disparate elements of the space complex left over from the former Soviet Union; that infrastructure would enable Ukraine to exercise independent control over its space satellites. Ukraine's coming of age as a space power would inevitably result in increased cooperation with other members of the international community, and particularly with developing countries, in developing outer space for peaceful purposes.

10. There had been a concomitant increase in the need to provide spin-off benefits from the expanded application of space technologies in developing countries and countries with transitional economies. That process had already begun and had been demonstrated by various countries' national statements at the most recent session of COPUOS. There had been a significant increase in the variety of space technology applications and the use and elaboration of new methods in the following areas: industrial measurements and control, data processing, medicine, computer systems, robotics, power generation, special materials and chemicals, water treatment, public safety, consumer goods, refrigeration and manufacturing industry.

11. The Ukrainian space sector had been actively working to apply space technologies to forecasting and alleviating the consequences of natural and industrial disasters, and Ukraine was currently in a position to become actively involved in international cooperation in that area.

12. Ukraine welcomed the adoption by the Committee of a decision on the possible convening of a third UNISPACE conference before the end of the twentieth century. Such a conference would undoubtedly constitute a further successful step towards expansion of the peaceful uses of outer space. Ukraine had specific arrangements for the use of space technology in emergencies and was willing to cooperate on the broadest scale in an activity that was important to all regions of the world.

13. Ukraine's initiatives in the framework of COPUOS, in particular its recent proposal to set up an international space research centre at the Yevpatoriya centre for outer space communication, were also oriented towards the promotion and expansion of international cooperation. The possible use of the extremely well-equipped astronomical observatory in the Crimea for international projects had also aroused considerable interest from the point of view of international cooperation in space studies.

14. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) said that although space research and the application of space technology were a powerful tool for the promotion of global development, the majority of third world countries were unable to make full use of available knowledge, technological innovations and information infrastructures. Under those circumstances, his delegation sincerely hoped that COPUOS, which had an important role to play in dealing with complex questions of space science and technology and ensuring that the rule of law was extended to that area also, would take concerted action to strengthen international cooperation aimed at consolidating the effective and equitable sharing of space resources, particularly in the interests of the developing countries.

15. Despite the modest scale of its space programme, Indonesia was firmly committed to the promotion of space technology and its use in the service of national development. It was therefore expanding its space research. At the same time, it felt that progress in outer space research and exploitation could best be achieved by joining forces in major international, regional and bilateral projects. Regional cooperation, in particular, offered unprecedented opportunities for the acceleration of economic and social development. To that end, COPUOS and its subcommittees should endeavour to develop a framework that would ensure the equitable sharing of knowledge and technology derived from outer space activities.

16. His delegation, noting with satisfaction that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-second session, had given priority attention to the question of implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), and expressing regret at the inadequate financial support for such action, renewed its call to all States, especially those with space capabilities, to make increased contributions to the relevant programme.

17. As an equatorial country, Indonesia had always expressed concern about the hazards of space debris, and considered it essential to intensify cooperation among States members of the Committee in formulating effective strategies to minimize the potential impact of space debris on future space missions and to protect the earth's environment.

18. His delegation supported the decision to designate themes for in-depth consideration by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, a step that effectively focused its attention on matters of special significance. Indonesia had always attached particular importance to the discussion on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, and concurred with the view that any review of the underlying principles should aim at a further strengthening of the safety factor.

19. Indonesia emphasized the need for negotiations on the vital issue for developing countries of the establishment of a legal regime governing the geostationary orbit that would ensure equitable access to it. The Legal Subcommittee should earnestly pursue its discussions on the matter with a view to identifying points of convergence.

20. In view of the importance of the spin-off benefits of space technology for the solution of common problems, his delegation called for continued cooperation in the development of such benefits and for assurances that access to them would be open to all States. In conclusion, his delegation supported the proposal to convene a third UNISPACE conference before the end of the decade as a unique opportunity for the international community to assess progress in the peaceful uses of outer space and in collective action to promote international cooperation in the field for the benefit of all mankind.

21. Mr. SANTAPUTRA (Thailand) acknowledged the vital role of COPUOS, which had consistently worked to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes and to ensure that it was used for the benefit of all mankind. It also played an important role in preventing an arms race in outer space. Thailand, like many other countries, derived enormous benefit from space-related technologies. It had launched its second telecommunication satellite into the geostationary orbit the previous year and was cooperating with a number of States, in particular Canada, Japan and Norway, on joint scientific space research and space-use programmes.

22. Thailand's commitment to the peaceful use of outer space was beyond question. Its capacity for space-related programmes was relatively advanced for its region. In that connection, Thailand was offering to host a branch for remote sensing and the Geographic Information System (GIS) of the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education, the headquarters of which was in India. Space technology would then become more easily accessible to the countries of the region. Thailand also hoped that regional centres for space science and technology education, under United Nations auspices, would be established in all regions in the near future.

23. In view of its strong support for international cooperation, particularly between developed and developing countries, in joint scientific research and the development of space technology, Thailand welcomed the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Satellite Communications Council, which would serve as a regional forum to promote exchanges of information and cooperation in the field of satellite communications and broadcasting.

24. Mrs. FLORES (Uruguay) said that, at its previous session, COPUOS had continued to focus attention on the ways and means of reserving outer space for peaceful purposes, which demonstrated the necessity for strengthened

international cooperation in the peaceful utilization of outer space, in both the scientific and legal spheres, taking into particular account the needs of the developing countries. Strengthening such cooperation would require efforts to develop space law and to formulate rules for the practical application of scientific and technical advances, as well as to coordinate the work of different forums and bodies concerned with space issues.

25. She stressed the importance of the regional and interregional cooperation mechanisms referred to in resolution 49/34 of 9 December 1994 and the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, and said that Uruguay planned to host the Third Space Conference of the Americas, which would be held at the end of 1996. An inter-agency working group had been set up to prepare and organize the Conference, with a technical secretariat, responsible for directing the work of the aerospace research and information dissemination centre, and a subsidiary group of international scientific experts.

26. Her delegation welcomed the priority given by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to matters relating to remote sensing, by satellites and was pleased to see that the issue of the use of nuclear power sources in outer space remained on its agenda. It also noted with approval that the issue of space debris was one of the Subcommittee's priority items. International cooperation was essential in that area, in order to develop appropriate and economically acceptable strategies for minimizing the adverse effects of such debris. Uruguay had repeatedly drawn attention to the need for a legal instrument on problems of space pollution and, by corollary, on the issue of space debris.

27. At its next session, the Subcommittee should pay particular attention to the issue of micro-satellite technologies, with due account for the needs of developing countries. She also commended the Legal Subcommittee on its consideration of the legal aspects related to the application of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all States, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries. Uruguay was one of those countries which, for a number of years, had been making efforts to promote the preparation of a working paper containing appropriate legal principles. Those principles would facilitate the development of international cooperation which was sensitive to the requirements of the developing countries for access to the benefits of space research and to the concerns of the developed countries with regard to the idea of developing mandatory collaborative arrangements designed to promote the transfer of technology.

28. Mr. NUÑEZ MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space were the right of all peoples, but that only through international cooperation could all States without exception be granted equal access to knowledge about space and the ability to enjoy the benefits it could provide. In that connection, the work of COPUOS was of vital significance and, thanks to the establishment of the regional centres, its effectiveness was growing. At the same time, Cuba opposed a number of proposals, which made no useful contribution to that Committee's work. In particular, it objected to the curtailment of the sessions of COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies and did not support attempts to diminish the significance of the work of the Scientific and Technical and the Legal Subcommittees. Cuba was opposed to efforts to take the

issue of the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space outside the purview of the United Nations.

29. The utilization of outer space should not take the form of its militarization. Cuba was opposed to the militarization of outer space and to the extension of the arms race into outer space. The militarization of outer space, interference with space research activities by space piracy and the remote sensing of natural resources from outer space for the purpose of their economic exploitation and for political leverage also represented forms of colonization incompatible with the principle of the sovereign equality of all States.

30. Mr. MAZARI (Pakistan) said that appropriate measures should be taken, as a matter of priority, for the development of an adequate programme of technical assistance and transfer of space-related technology to developing countries, based on the principle of equity and non-discrimination. During the previous year, Pakistan's space activities had included such areas as remote sensing, data collection and environmental research; satellite communication research; atmospheric research; environmental pollution studies and atmospheric research. Pakistan was currently hosting the Fifth United Nations/ESA Workshop on Basic Space Science.

31. Pakistan favoured a comprehensive convention to prevent an arms race in outer space. Particular attention should be given to the banning and subsequent dismantling of anti-satellite weapons, as well as those forms of ballistic missile defence which could be used in or from outer space. The Legal Subcommittee should give particularly close attention to the issue of the definition and delimitation of outer space, as well as to the nature and utilization of the geostationary orbit. His delegation attached great importance to achieving speedy progress in resolving the issue of the third UNISPACE conference during the forthcoming sessions of both the Scientific and Technical Subcommittees and COPUOS itself.

32. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was essential to elaborate legal principles which would ensure that all countries had access to outer space activities and benefited from those activities. Enhanced cooperation between CUPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament would facilitate an early conclusion of an agreement or agreements on the demilitarization of outer space. His delegation believed that convening a third UNISPACE conference, particularly in a developing country and before the end of the century, would create an opportunity for a greater number of States and peoples to consider the achievements in space technology and their applications and to enjoy the benefits deriving from the implementation of space programmes.

33. Mr. RI Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said with regard to the use of outer space that two elements should not be overlooked, namely access to such use and the exclusively peaceful nature of that use. Any deviation from those principles would affect the very existence of human beings in the long run. The role of the United Nations should be strengthened in such a way as to develop space resources and technology and promote international cooperation in space activities. Developing countries should receive preferential access to data banks containing information on natural resources and environmental

protection. In particular, information on weather forecasts, which were important for human activities, should be supplied free of charge.

34. COPUOS should act as a focal point in ensuring that space science and technology worked for the benefit of humankind. The ever more urgent calls by the developing countries for an enlargement of the membership of COPUOS should therefore be duly considered. His country, although limited in its capabilities in space exploration and utilization, had achieved certain successes in applying space technology to such fields as agriculture, marine industry, geological surveying and protection of the environment.

35. Ms. VARGAS DE LOSADA (Colombia) said that her delegation attached great importance to international cooperation in the use of outer space, in which the developing countries should increasingly be the participants and beneficiaries. Her delegation considered it essential to continue support for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, given the positive results produced for developing countries by the workshops, training courses and seminars held under the Programme. It also welcomed the establishment of the regional centres for space science and technology education.

36. With regard to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, her delegation supported its decision that the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space should remain valid until the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had given its opinion on whether they should be reviewed in the light of advances in technology.

37. With regard to matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union, her delegation welcomed the fact that the working paper (A/AC.105/C.2/L.192) submitted by Colombia at the Subcommittee's thirty-second session had led to a productive exchange of views on the matter. It also noted with satisfaction the progress made in connection with the consideration of the legal aspects related to the application of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all States, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries. It particularly welcomed the fact that the paper submitted by Brazil and other countries and the paper submitted by Germany and France had served as the basis for the preparation by the Chairman of the Subcommittee of an informal working paper which would form the basis for a discussion of the subject at the thirty-fifth session of the Subcommittee.

38. Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Russian Federation) expressed his conviction that the international community needed COPUOS. At the same time, some essential reforms in the Committee's activities should be carried out. Differences of opinion on that issue emerged when specific ways of resolving it, substantive reforms and ways of implementing them were discussed. He did not agree with the proposals aimed at reviewing the agenda without due forethought and radically reducing the length of sessions of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. Work on the priority agenda item was limited to a discussion of the most general nature, in contrast with the intensive and imaginative work the Committee had carried out

in the past on the basic outer space treaties. Work on the priority item should be given its own logical framework within which it was possible to rely on a given result being achieved, based on a thorough analysis and understanding of all the elements of that complex problem. The Russian Federation had offered to carry out a survey among States regarding their perception of the problem of reserving space for peaceful purposes. Such a questionnaire would make it possible to identify, crystallize and agree on specific approaches by States to resolving that problem. The main issue in such a survey would be how States assessed the level of regulation of space activity by international law that had been achieved with regard to reserving space for peaceful purposes; States would also be asked their opinions on likely future directions for further developments in theory and practice. Such a specific approach would make it possible to agree on a practical agenda and organizational outline for taking action in that direction.

39. The results of the Legal Subcommittee's work in 1995 had reflected real progress, the new dynamism of the debate and the desire of delegations for rapprochement. Additional measures were needed to broaden mutual understanding of the contents of the Subcommittee's future work plan. Regarding specific items on the Subcommittee's current agenda, his delegation thought it important to note the following main points. First, it was necessary to broaden the scope of work on the draft principles governing international cooperation in outer space, bearing in mind that the relevant general working document was a good basis for the formulation of agreed decisions. Second, the forthcoming work scheduled for the following year on delimiting airspace and outer space also required greater attention; the agreed questionnaire concerning aerospace objects covered important topics and would encourage innovative logical and conceptual approaches to the issue. He hoped that at some stage it would be possible to find common ground between supporters and critics of a review of space delimitation issues and the debate could then proceed to the next level. It would initially be necessary to decide jointly which elements of the present formula should be left intact and which needed to be rectified. Third, new impetus needed to be given to work on the geostationary orbit. There was an objective need to restart dialogue on various topics concerning equitable and effective use of the geostationary orbit, including the work of the International Telecommunication Union in that field. His delegation noted the constructive attitude of the Colombian delegation in preparing a revised version of the draft principles for the use of the geostationary orbit, which would take account of the proposals that had been submitted, in time for the following session. At some stage, further joint work needed to be done on proposals to draw up a code of principles for the international-legal regulation of the problem of spent space objects cluttering the geostationary orbit. Before such a legal document was drawn up, the Scientific and Technical Committee should examine the question in order to determine the best disposal orbit and to formulate and agree on the most effective and economic methods of accomplishing re-orbiting.

40. During the current year, the topic of space debris had been a central consideration in statements by representatives of a number of States. He noted the constructive desire to discuss ways and means of making the transition to norm-setting in that complex and sensitive area. Those who advocated involving the Legal Subcommittee in work on the topic of space debris had on the whole

been disinclined to politicize that important and significant area of activity. Bearing in mind the progress that had been made, the objections to the holding of a scientific and practical seminar during the following session seemed illogical, to say the least.

41. It would seem entirely realistic to adopt an interim decision to the effect that the Legal Subcommittee should consider the topic of space debris over a two- or three-year period, with particular emphasis on those aspects of the problem associated with possible general approaches to the elaboration of a blueprint for legal regulation in the field of the prevention of space debris. Certain aspects of that complex topic could be examined at future sessions of the Subcommittee. Moreover, the Legal Subcommittee could in the near future conduct a survey of current norms and principles of international environmental law pertaining to the problem of space debris. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee would also have to agree on new fields and cooperation mechanisms in which existing international institutions would find renewed purpose. A major issue which the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had to date only addressed tangentially was the elaboration of recommendations to avert the industrial pollution of outer space. Additional impetus would have to be given to efforts in that field.

42. With regard to forthcoming cooperation forums, the Russian Federation noted the establishment in India of the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for the region of Asia and the Pacific. The discussions about convening another world conference on outer space were also a positive development. Provided that all the organizational aspects of such an event were worked out, the convening of a UNISPACE-3 conference would seem to be a realistic proposition in the year 2000.

43. Mr. GONZALES BUSTOS (Mexico) said that the nature of activities relating to the peaceful uses of outer space and international cooperation in that field had changed significantly since the establishment of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) at the end of the 1950s. In a little over 40 years since its founding, the Committee had played an exceptionally important role in elaborating general legal frameworks for the regulation and development of multilateral cooperation with a view to enabling all States to derive benefit from activities connected with the use of outer space. Despite the important work done by the Committee during those years, the continuing serious imbalance in space technology between developed and developing countries still gave cause for concern. The Committee had been called upon to play an important role in correcting that state of affairs through the development of international cooperation. It was extremely important to strengthen and galvanize the Committee's work by reviewing its methods of work, speeding up the consideration of items on its agenda and including in its agenda other matters which required priority attention. It was also extremely important to ensure the universal application of the five international treaties on space issues as soon as possible. Questions relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and the geostationary orbit, space debris, the convening of a UNISPACE-3 conference and the use of nuclear power sources in outer space had been particularly important items on the agenda of the Committee and its two Subcommittees. His delegation reaffirmed that the United Nations should play a central role in coordinating measures designed to encourage the study and use of

outer space for peaceful purposes, the strengthening of legal documents, the regulation of activities in outer space and support for international cooperation in that area.

44. Two years previously Mexico and Brazil had been chosen by the United Nations to establish the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Governments of both countries had reached agreement on all issues relating to the establishment, functioning and funding of the Centre; at the present time, the only questions that remained unresolved were those relating to the form and scale of cooperation between the Centre and the United Nations. His delegation hoped that, following the adoption of the resolution on the Committee's work, the obstacles currently standing in the way of establishing the Regional Centre would be overcome.

Draft resolution A/C.4/50/L.9

45. Draft resolution A/C.4/50/L.9 was adopted without a vote.

46. Mr. HIROSE (Japan) said that, while the use of unedited transcripts of COPUOS sessions instead of verbatim records would contribute to the reduction of costs and the rationalization of the work of the Committee, his delegation continued to question whether there was even a need for unedited transcripts. His delegation had joined the consensus on the resolution that had just been adopted on the understanding that the Committee would review the need for unedited transcripts at its 1997 session.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of agenda item 83.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.